

Chandidas: what makes the first one different from the others

The Indian literary tradition knows several poets under the name (or pen-name) of Chandidas, all of whom lived in Bengal and created their works up to the late 18th century. The actual time when the first Chandidas lived is very hard to determine: the earliest time mentioned in literature is as early as the 12th century, although there is little evidence for such an early date. S. Sen suggests the 1st third of the 16th century as the latest possible date of his lifetime (as it is mentioned that he had to live earlier than Chaitanya), some other scholars, such as B. Mojumdar, suggest an earlier date (such as the 15th century); in general, he is often called the “pre-Chaitanya Chandidas” and the later poets are collectively referred to as the “post-Chaitanya” ones.

The decision about the attribution of a Chandidas’ poem to one or another Chandidas depends mostly on the *bhanita*: it is generally believed that only the pre-Chaitanya Chandidas referred to himself as simply “Chandidas” in the last two lines of his poems, and the others used some title to distinguish them (such as Baru Chandidas, Din Chandidas etc.). However, certain other things also have to be considered when deciding which Chandidas is most likely to have authored a particular text, among them the linguistic traits and the “religious spirit” of the poem. It is believed that the earliest Chandidas expressed his original view on the events of the world, and the later ones paid more attention to the religious side of life.

In B. Mojumdar’s edition of poems by Chandidas 120 poems are marked as “genuine” and 101 poem is considered to be “dubious” (probably composed by other poets) due to various reasons. This paper suggests to take a closer look on the linguistic features and contents of the “dubious” poems and determine how much they differ from the “genuine” ones written by pre-Chaitanya Chandidas, as well as from the poems attributed to other poets under the same name.